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Olive Oil Without Borders II: *Expanding Cross-Border Collaboration in the Olive Sector*



NEAR EAST FOUNDATION

Partners for Community Development since 1915

Quarterly Report

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Cover Photo: Discussions in an olive field (NEF).

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

| | |
|-------|---|
| GIMI | Galilee International Management Institute |
| MoA | Ministry of Agriculture (Palestinian Authority) |
| NEF | Near East Foundation |
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| PARCC | Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration |
| PCARD | Palestinian Center for Agriculture Researches and Development |
| PCP | Peres Center for Peace |
| PTU | Palestine Technical University |
| ToT | Training of Trainers |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| WB | West Bank |

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Olive Oil Without Borders II project continues to make great progress towards fostering economic collaboration and opportunity among Palestinians and Israelis in the olive sector.

This report summarizes the activities and impact during the project's second quarter, from January 1, 2015 - March 31, 2015. The project continued its start-up phase, establishing a foundation for the implementation of project activities.

Key accomplishments during the reporting period include the following:

- The project team conducted several single-group meetings with the Palestinian and Israeli Olive Oil Councils (POOC and the IOOC) as a first step towards joint POOC-IOOC meetings, which will be organized and guided by NEF and its partner in the upcoming quarters.
- NEF drafted a Terms of Reference document for the joint market assessment, which was shared with USAID and potential consultants. Consultants have been recruited and the assessment will be completed during the next quarter.
- The project held a joint launch workshop in Iksal, Israel, on March 24th, with 50 potential participants attending (30 men and 20 women; 24 Palestinian and 26 Israeli). Four launch workshops were also held in new-targeted sites in the West Bank.
- The first peer-to-peer learning session took place at current OOWB sites on March 14th.

The project continues to implement activities as outlined in its implementation plan, and is having a strong impact. These impacts are consolidated and shared here in this quarterly report.

II. PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Olive Oil Without Borders II: Palestinian-Israeli Olive Oil Project works to build relationships of trust, mutual understanding, and collaboration through economic cooperation. Building on the success and momentum of the USAID-funded Olive Oil without Borders (OOWB) project, NEF aims to strengthen linkages between Israeli and West Bank olive industry leaders and to expand to new communities and regions. The project will work with 1,500 olive farmers in 58 communities in the West Bank and Israel to (1) build working relationships between business, policy, and academic leaders through cross-border workshops and joint initiatives; (2) expand economic cooperation to farmers, mill owners, and distributors in 34 current villages and in 24 new villages; and (3) develop 50 ancillary businesses, including cross-border collaboration between women's fair-trade associations.

The Olive Oil Without Borders II project is based on the hypothesis that cross-border economic cooperation offers a structured depoliticized process for building trust, relationships, mutual understanding, and capacity for collective action in pursuit of shared economic interests. NEF takes a value chain approach to strengthen the olive oil sector in Israel and the West Bank through cooperation at many levels. Our hypothesis is based on the understanding that economic cooperation and social/political reconciliation are parallel processes. Economic cooperation depends on and builds trust, communication, and sustained relationships. Building trust and social capital depends on (1) understanding common interests and constraints, (2) identifying opportunities for collaborative, mutually beneficial activities, and (3) repeating

interactions over time. Value chain development is based on stakeholders working together to strengthen a sector as a whole; the win-win solutions that emerge help build lasting trust and social capital. Economic cooperation has spillover effects in other spheres of social and political life. Strengthening business relationships lays the groundwork for four necessary components of reconciliation: (1) the structural environment becomes more conducive to exchange and cooperation; (2) new narratives emerge about the ‘problems’ and ‘the other side’ that are more conducive to collaboration and trust; (3) there is movement away from positional bargaining toward interest-based negotiation; and (4) heightened emotional reactions to conflicts in an economic sector are replaced with more rational and deliberative forms of expression.

III. ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

A. Objective 1: Strengthen cross-border cooperation and leadership development through joint marketing and applied research.

Activity 1.1. Build capacity for collaboration between Palestinian and Israeli Olive Oil Councils.

During January and February, the project team conducted several single-group meetings with the Palestinian and Israeli Olive Oil Councils (POOC and the IOOC).

The project team and partner PCARD met with the POOC and the IOOC Councils separately in order to obtain an idea of the respective issues concerning each group, with the plan to then bring them together in one larger joint meeting. The separate meetings have allowed the team to discuss in greater detail roles and responsibilities of each party and to facilitate a more constructive dialogue. The project team reviewed with the POOC the steps that will be taken as part of the project to increase their capacity.

As both councils play a major role in managing and improving the olive sector in their respective regions, the intervention developed by the project team is a structured way of highlighting areas for discussion and negotiation. The project encourages and fosters a space for both councils to work with each other in a fruitful and mutually beneficial way. The steps of this process are as follows:

- 1- Members of both councils meet separately to gain an overall sense of the project, its activities, and respective roles. The outcomes of these single group meetings should reflect how each council views the other group’s role in the project and how each council can be of assistance and cooperation with the other council.
- 2- Members of both councils identify common areas of interest that can be discussed during quarterly meetings.
- 3- Members of both councils identify the issues and constraints that could potentially prevent the councils from working together. This process can also serve as the basis for concrete actions to improve relations between both councils, while considering possibilities for further cooperation in OOWB II.

Due to the planned POOC board election on April 12th, the scheduled joint POOC-IOOC meeting for this quarter was delayed until the new POOC board is in place. During the next quarter, the first joint quarterly meeting between the two councils will be organized and guided

by NEF and its partner.

Activity 1.2. Promote joint branding and marketing initiatives among cooperatives and private businesses.

Joint market assessment: NEF drafted a Terms of Reference document for the joint market assessment, which was shared with USAID and potential consultants (See [Appendix 2](#)).

In late March, the project team distributed the Terms of Reference to potential contractors, the bidding process was completed and, after a careful evaluation of potential consulting companies and freelancers from both Israel and the West Bank, the OOWB II project selected a local company to conduct the assessment. Two highly qualified consultants, Dr. Naif Khaldy from Israel and Dr. Suleiman Daifi from the West Bank, will conduct the joint market assessment of the olive market in both Israel and the West Bank.

NEF organized a meeting with the team to discuss the assessment methodology, scope and expected results in greater detail. The two consultants will work together to provide a comprehensive study that reflects the olive market in both the West Bank and Israel. They will also provide realistic recommendations and practical suggestions for interventions that the OOWB II project team can employ in order to contribute to the improvement of the olive sector on both sides.

The Joint Market Assessment report will be prepared and shared with USAID in the next quarter.

Activity 1.3. Promote collaborative studies and activities to improve productivity, certification, and quality of West Bank and Israeli olive oil.

Joint Olive Advisory Committee: NEF, in cooperation with project partners, has formed a six-person joint advisory committee to advise, direct, and monitor research efforts and collaborative studies focused on a unified Israeli and West Bank olive industry.

The committee members will recruit outstanding candidates and researchers for agricultural studies. They will also provide advice and recommendations about international tradeshow in which project members could participate.

The committee members are:

| # | Name | Title/ Organization | Nationality |
|---|------------------------|--|-------------|
| 1 | Eng. Salah Abu Eisheh | NEF Country Director | Palestinian |
| 2 | Eng. Fares Al-Jabi | PCARD/ President | Palestinian |
| 3 | Eng. Khalid Al-Junaidi | PCARD/ Vice President | Palestinian |
| 4 | Dr. No'man Mizyed | Al-Najah National University | Palestinian |
| 5 | Dr. Fathi Abd Al-Hadi | Head of the Israeli olive oil tasting crew/ northern Israel | Israeli |
| 6 | Hasan Azayza | GIMI/ Researcher | Israeli |
| 7 | Roven Berger | Agricultural Consultant | Israeli |
| 8 | Azmi Najar | Owner of Agricultural Supplies Company | Israeli |

B. Objective 2: Expand grassroots, cross-border economic cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank.

Activity 2.1. Develop a network of “Champions” to scale up community participation in cross-border cooperation in the olive sector.

Champions’ Training: The project team has made plans for a two-day advanced joint training program for 9 selected champions (5 Israeli and 4 Palestinian) and OOWB II key staff members to be held in April. Training sessions by The Galilee International Management Institution will cover topics such as communication and leadership, and NEF senior agricultural experts and consultants will share information and updates on improved techniques in the olive sector. The champions will share information through trainings to 40 selected lead farmers.

The two-day Champions' Training will be held at GIMI training center at Kibbutz Mizra' near Afula, Israel. The time and location for the third training day will be determined in coordination with the champions at the conclusion of the two-day training at GIMI.

Activity 2.2. Conduct single-group and cross-border workshops to engage olive producers in the OOWB II project.

Launch Workshops: The project team held four launch workshops in West Bank communities targeted by the project:

- Al Arroub (Hebron Cluster): January 15th; 42 participants
- Deir Bzi' (Ramallah Cluster): January 21st; 46 participants
- Bitu (Nablus Cluster): January 22nd; 28 participants
- Kfr Rai' (Jenin Cluster): January 26th; 25 participants

These workshops were attended by potential participants, community leaders, and other interested parties. Significant percentages of women were in attendance at the launch workshops.

Joint Launch Workshop: On March 24th, the project held a joint launch workshop in Iksal, Israel. 50 potential participants attended the workshop (30 men and 20 women; 24 Palestinian and 26 Israeli). With this workshop, the project launch workshops have now been completed in the new-targeted sites of the OOWB II project.

During this joint workshop, attendees had the opportunity to discuss details of the project with key NEF personnel as well as NEF's partner organizations in the project. The joint launch workshop also offered participants their first opportunity to meet with their cross-border colleagues and to build a foundation for making real progress in advancing the Olive Oil Without Borders II project.



Project participants taking part in a discussion at the Joint Launch Workshop.

Activity 2.4. Expand participation in cross-border olive oil activities in 24 new communities in the West Bank and Israel; establish 4 Farmer Field Schools.

Peer-to-Peer session: On March 14th, the first peer-to-peer learning session took place at current OOWB sites. Two of the current OOWB lead farmers from Asira Al-Shamalya hosted peer-to-peer training sessions: (1) the first at Muhammad Shouly's Farmer Field School (FFS) and (2) the second at Qusai Hamadna mill, renovated as part of the OOWB I project. 46 agricultural engineering students from PTU visited the FFS and olive mill to learn about improved agricultural techniques that have been introduced and implemented.

Participants demonstrated considerable interest in the knowledge shared by OOWB lead farmers.

C. Crosscutting Areas

Word of the many benefits and the impact of the OOWB project in both the West Bank and Israel has been promulgated via several social media sites, YouTube, and online journals. Media coverage has included the following:

- "Israeli and Palestinian Farmers Unite Over Olive Oil: Can an Agricultural Project Relay Overcome Years of Bitter Tribalism," (Assaf Dudai), *Good Magazine*: <http://magazine.good.is/features/olive-oil-without-borders-israel-palestine>
- "Olive Oil of Hope" (Paige Alexander), U.S. Department of State Official Blog, March 13, 2015. <http://blogs.state.gov/stories/2015/03/13/olive-oil-hope>
- "Olive Oil of Hope" (Paige Alexander), March 11, 2015, USAID Blog: <http://blog.usaid.gov/2015/03/olive-oil-of-hope/#.VQDTAipTnI.facebook>
- "Olive Oil Without Borders" (Aldo Pesce), February 15, 2015 in *Olive Oil Times*, <http://www.oliveoiltimes.com/olive-oil-basics/olive-oil-without-borders/46573>
- "Olive Oil Without Borders: Promoting Peace in the Middle East" (Alison Costa), March 6, 2015. *Global Citizen*. <https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/olive-oil-without-borders-promoting-peace-in-the-m/>

See Appendix 3 for copies of these articles (with the exception of the Olive Oil Times article, for which we have only included the link here).

As a result of the growing positive reputation of the project, a freelance writer from New York City visited the West Bank to cover the project's success. Mrs. Joan Erakit, a freelance writer who covers development and women's issues, visited a group of the OOWB I female farmers in the West Bank and Israel to hear and document their stories regarding the OOWB project.

Project Video. NEF completed a brief video on the project, which can be viewed here: <https://vimeo.com/117965907>.

NEF Participation at GATHER+962: Mr. Salah Abu Eishah and Mr. Mohammad Joudeh participated in GATHER+962, a meeting of this practical action initiative from Seeds of Peace, which took place at the Mövenpick Resort at the Dead Sea in Jordan, from February 26th to March 1st, 2015.

Over the course of three days, the meeting brought together emerging leaders with established figures from the fields of international philanthropy, diplomacy, finance, education, technology and media. During ‘Social Networking’ hours, GATHER staff members facilitated introductions between the participants and the delegates. This helped to foster connections, which may be future sources of collaboration and help drive prospective initiatives forward.

The event was a platform for the launch of the Seed Fellows Program. This fellowship program is open to those who have exemplified extraordinary achievement, or who demonstrate such potential as activists in the social change-entrepreneurial arena. Successful candidates will be recipients of a grant and will also be eligible to participate in a 2015 Leadership Incubator.

IV. PROGRESS AGAINST WORKPLAN

The Olive Oil Without Borders II project has made progress as projected against its first year implementation plan. A chart measuring progress against the workplan can be found in [Appendix 1](#).

V. CHALLENGES, REMEDIAL ACTIONS, AND LESSONS LEARNED

No challenges or lessons have been noted at this point in the project.

VI. PROJECT INDICATORS & IMPACT

Chart: Summary of Project Indicators, Targets and Impact

| # | Indicator | CURRENT QUARTER | YEAR 1 TARGET | PROJECT (ACTUAL) |
|----|--|-----------------|---------------|------------------|
| 1 | Percentage of participants who indicate that they have an increased positive perception about "the other." | - | N/A | - |
| 2 | Number of US funded events, trainings, or activities designed to build support for peace or reconciliation on a mass scale. | 2 | 25 | 2 |
| 3 | Number of people participating in USG-supported events, trainings, or activities designed to build mass support for peace and reconciliation. | 96 | 250 | 96 |
| 4 | Number of women participating in USG-supported events, trainings, or activities designed to build mass support for peace and reconciliation. | 31 | 75 | 31 |
| 5 | Number of youth participating in USG-supported events, trainings, or activities designed to build mass support for peace and reconciliation. | 51 | 100 | 51 |
| 6 | Number of participants from Israel in USG-supported events, trainings, or activities designed to build mass support for peace and reconciliation. | 26 | 125 | 26 |
| 7 | Number of participants from the West Bank in USG-supported events, trainings, or activities designed to build mass support for peace and reconciliation. | 70 | 125 | 70 |
| 8 | Number of private enterprises, trade/ business associations, or community-based organizations that applied new technologies or management practices. | - | 1 | - |
| 9 | Percentage of direct participants expressing support for cross-border economic collaboration. | - | N/A | - |
| 10 | Number of micro, small and medium enterprises receiving business development services from USG assisted sources. | - | 0 | - |
| 11 | Percentage of female participants in USG-assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources. | - | N/A | - |

Project Goal: Promote peaceful coexistence among Israelis and Palestinians and improve mutual understanding and dialogue on issues of common concern.

1. Percentage of participants who indicate that they have an increased positive perception about “the other.”

| INDICATOR | Year 1 Target | Project Actual | Current Quarter |
|--|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Percentage of participants who indicate that they have an increased positive perception about “the other.” | NA | - | NA |

2. Number of USG-funded events, trainings, or activities designed to build support for peace or reconciliation on a mass scale.

| INDICATOR | Year 1 Target | Project Actual | Current Quarter |
|--|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Number of USG-funded events, trainings, or activities designed to build support for peace or reconciliation on a mass scale. | 25 | 2 | 2 |

This includes the Joint Launch workshop and a Peer-to-Peer training session.

IR 1: Strengthened Cross-border cooperation and leadership is strengthened between Palestinian and Israeli participants through joint marketing and applied research.

3. Number of people participating in USG-supported events, trainings, or activities designed to build mass support for peace and reconciliation.

| | Year 1 | Project | | | Current Quarter | | |
|---|--------|---------|------|--------|-----------------|------|--------|
| INDICATOR | TARGET | ACTUAL | MALE | FEMALE | ACTUAL | MALE | FEMALE |
| Number of people participating in USG-supported events, trainings, or activities designed to build mass support for peace and reconciliation. | 250 | 96 | 65 | 31 | 96 | 65 | 31 |

This includes Joint Launch workshop participants and Peer-to-Peer session participants.

4. Number of women participating in USG-supported events, trainings, or activities designed to build mass support for peace and reconciliation.

| INDICATOR | Year 1 Target | Project Actual | Current Quarter |
|--|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Number of women participating in USG-supported events, trainings, or activities designed to build mass support for peace and reconciliation. | 75 | 31 | 31 |

This includes Joint Launch workshop participants and Peer-to-Peer session participants.

5. Number of youth participating in USG-supported events, trainings, or activities designed to build mass support for peace and reconciliation.

| INDICATOR | Year 1 Target | Project Actual | Current Quarter |
|--|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Number of youth participating in USG-supported events, trainings, or activities designed to build mass support for peace and reconciliation. | 100 | 51 | 51 |

This includes the youth participants at the Joint Launch workshop and the Peer-to-Peer session.

6. Number of participants from Israel participating in USG-supported events, trainings, or activities designed to build mass support for peace and reconciliation.

| INDICATOR | Year 1 Target | Project Actual | Current Quarter |
|---|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Number of participants from Israel participating in USG-supported events, trainings, or activities designed to build mass support for peace and reconciliation. | 125 | 26 | 26 |

This includes the Israeli participants at the Joint Launch workshop and the Peer-to-Peer session.

7. Number of participants from the West Bank participating in USG-supported events, trainings, or activities designed to build mass support for peace and reconciliation.

| INDICATOR | Year 1 Target | Project Actual | Current Quarter |
|--|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Number of participants from the West Bank participating in USG-supported events, trainings, or activities designed to build mass support for peace and reconciliation. | 125 | 70 | 70 |

This includes the Palestinian Participants at the Joint Launch workshop and the Peer-to-Peer session.

IR 2: Expanded grassroots, cross-border economic cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank.

8. Number of private enterprises, trade/ business associations, or community-based organizations that applied new technologies or management practices.

| INDICATOR | Year 1 Target | Project Actual | Current Quarter |
|--|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Number of private enterprises, trade/ business associations, or community-based organizations that applied new technologies or management practices. | 1 | - | - |

9. Percentage of direct participants expressing support for cross-border economic collaboration.

| INDICATOR | Year 1 Target | Project Actual | Current Quarter |
|---|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Percentage of direct participants expressing support for cross-border economic collaboration. | NA | - | - |

IR 3: Strengthened cross-border structure of value chains by supporting the creation of networks of service providers and value-added businesses.

10. Number of micro, small and medium enterprises receiving business development services from USG assisted sources.

| INDICATOR | Year 1 Target | Project Actual | Current Quarter |
|--|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Number of micro, small and medium enterprises receiving business development services from USG assisted sources. | 0 | - | - |

11. Percentage of female participants in USG-assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources.

| INDICATOR | Year 1 Target | Project Actual | Current Quarter |
|--|---------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Percentage of female participants in USG-assisted programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources. | NA | - | - |

VII. UPCOMING ACTIVITIES

A. Objective I: Promote cross-border cooperation and leadership development through joint marketing and applied research.

Activity 1.1. Build capacity for collaboration between Palestinian and Israeli Olive Oil Councils.

POOC Self-assessment: In the next quarter, NEF will guide the POOC in an institutional self-assessment to determine its needs regarding resources, training, and support. A group of assessment workshops and meetings will be held to assess these needs and to determine the areas for collaborative development between NEF and the POOC.

A capacity building plan will be developed in Quarter 4 and technical and financial support will be provided late in Quarter 4 or in Quarter 5.

Activity 1.2. Promote joint branding and marketing initiatives among cooperatives and private businesses.

Trade Shows: Throughout this quarter, the OOWB II team, in coordination with its experienced consultants, began the process of researching potential olive oil trade shows to attend during Quarter 3 and 4 of the first year of the project.

A list of potential tradeshow was developed; the project team selected a group of tradeshow and communication with the organizers of the tradeshow is ongoing in an effort to collect more information about the registration details in Quarter 3.

Based on the communication with the organizers of the selected tradeshow, the project team will seek USAID approval before proceeding. Then, and according to the target group of each trade show, NEF and its partners, as well as the Joint Advisory Committee, will select participants from both sides to attend the selected trade show.



Project participants from Israel and the West Bank greet each other during the Join Launch Workshop.

IOOC-POOC Quarterly Meeting: In light of the separate meetings that NEF and PCARD conducted with each council, the project team will coordinate and guide the first joint meeting for OOWB II between the two councils and provide an update about the cross-border trading agreement signed by both sides in 2013 along with the sharing of

relevant common challenges.

Activity 1.3. Promote collaborative studies and activities to improve productivity, certification, and quality of West Bank and Israeli olive oil.

Joint Advisory Committee Meeting: Early in May, the project team will organize the first

quarterly meeting for the Joint Advisory Committee. This first meeting will aim to design a work plan for the committee.

B. Objective 2: Expand grassroots, cross-border economic cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank.

Activity 2.3. Conduct cross-border workshops to train 40 Palestinians from the West Bank and Israeli lead farmers in technical and conflict management skills.

Selection of 40 New Lead Farmers: The selection of the 40 new lead farmers by the project champions, advisory committee, NEF, and the project partners will take place in the next quarter. The 40 lead farmers from both sides will be selected from 20 villages following the same selection process in OOWB I.

Activity 2.4. Expand participation in cross-border olive oil activities in 24 new communities in the West Bank and Israel; establish 4 Farmer Field Schools.

Peer-to-Peer Session: PCARD with support from NEF, will facilitate, monitor, and track several peer-to-peer sessions that will be conducted and managed by the current OOWB lead farmers during the coming quarter. The project will seek to avoid duplicating beneficiaries and locations to the greatest extent possible.

C. Objective 3: Strengthen value chains structurally by supporting the creation of networks of service providers and value-added businesses.

Activity 3.2. Establish 20 women's cooperative microenterprises for value added olive products.

Women's Cooperative Training: Building on NEF's experience with women's associations in the West Bank and through its network inside Israel, the project team will conduct 2 to 3 separate meetings with key persons at select women's associations in the West Bank and Israel to assess their needs, to get an idea about their plans relative to the project's objectives, and to invite the women's association members to submit individual or groups application to participate at the training.

In mid-May, the project team will select at least 20 women from the submitted applications (10 Palestinian and 10 Israeli) to participate in a three-day business management training session. The training will allow the women to hone their skills in managing value-added microenterprises and developing feasible business ideas.

APPENDIX I: PROGRESS AGAINST WORKPLAN - OLIVE OIL WITHOUT BORDERS II, YEAR I WORK PLAN

Objective I: Strengthened cross-border cooperation and leadership development through joint marketing and applied research.

| Principal Activities | Specific activity | Number of Beneficiaries | Sub-Activities/Description | Assumptions (alternatives if necessary) | Deliverables | Predecessor and links | Level of effort from program & financial staff for activities | Responsibility | Output Indicators | Outcomes | Impact Expected | Location | Timing | 10 | 11 | 12 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | Status of Achievement | | | |
|---|--|-------------------------|---|---|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|----------------------------------|---|--|---|----------------------|--|--------------------------------|----|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----------------------|--|--|--|
| Activity 1.1: Capacity building with POOC. | I.1a Conduct institutional self-assessment | | NEF hosts needs-assessment workshops for POOC. | • POOC willing to engage in project activities • Security situation remains stable | POOC institutional assessment | | Medium-program staff | NEF, PCARD, partners | • # of organizations that applied new technologies/management practices. | • Increase POOC capacity to mobilize olive oil stakeholders throughout the value chain and regulate the industry • Enable POOC to organize mutually beneficial joint action with IOOC | POOC expanded capacity and effectiveness is established | West Bank | Q1-Q3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | Ongoing | | | |
| | I.1b Develop capacity building plan | | Finalize support and capacity building plan | | POOC capacity building plan | | Medium-program staff | NEF, PCARD, partners | | | | | Q4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | I.1c Provide training/support to POOC | 10 POOC members | 6 coaching sessions to take place during the joint meetings. | | 10 trained POOC members | Activity 1.2 | Medium-program staff and financial staff | NEF | | | | | Q4+Q5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | I.1d Provide access to resources to POOC | | NEF facilitates technical and infrastructure support | | Acquisition of resources | | Medium-program staff | NEF, PCARD, partners | | | | | Q4+Q5 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Activity 1.2: Promote joint branding and marketing among cooperatives and businesses. | I.2a Host quarterly joint IOOC/POOC meetings | | Sharing of common challenges & discuss potential cooperation | • IOOC and POOC willing to engage in meetings • Security situation remains stable | Quarterly cross-border workshops | Activity 2.1 and Activity 2.3 | High- program staff and financial staff | NEF, PCARD, Peres | • % of participants who indicate increased positive perception about "the other." • # of people participating in events, trainings, activities designed to build support for peace & reconciliation. • # of Cross-Border Branding, Marketing, and research planning activities. | | Network to share market information ; cross-border marketing facilitated; joint market assessment conducted | Israel and West Bank | Q1-Q4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | Ongoing | | | |
| | I.2b Conduct joint market assessment | | Identify opportunities for cooperation & potential markets for olive oil produced | | Joint market assessment | | Medium-program staff and financial staff | NEF, PCARD, IOOC, POOC, partners | | • # of people participating in events, trainings, activities designed to build support for peace & reconciliation. | | | Identify opportunities for cooperation. Identify ways for mutual access to the olive market in both sides. | Q2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | I.2c Establish cross-border market network | | Methods to pass market information to the community through champions and their trained peers (linked to activity 2.1). | | Market network established | | | NEF, PCARD, partners | | | | | Develop the Olive Sector market in both sides by mutual sharing of information. | Duration of project activities | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | I.2d Support cross-border marketing activities | | Support participation of 6 Israeli and Palestinian stakeholders at 2 trade shows | | 6 joint market access events | | | NEF, PCARD, partners | | | | | Olive Sector market in both sides is developed | Q3-Q4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| Principal Activities | Specific activity | Number of Beneficiaries | Sub-Activities/Description | Assumptions (alternatives if necessary) | Deliverables | Predecessor and links | Level of effort from program & financial staff for activities | Responsibility | Output Indicators | Outcomes | Impact Expected | Location | Timing | 10 | 11 | 12 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | Status of Achievement |
|--|--|-------------------------|--|--|------------------------------|-----------------------|---|----------------------------|--|--|-----------------|----------------------|--------|----|----|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----------------------|
| Activity 1.3: Promote collaborative studies and activities to improve productivity, certification, and quality of West Bank and Israeli olive oil. | 1.3a Establish Joint Olive Oil Industry Advisory Committee | | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Bring together key research and academic specialists to establish Joint Olive Industry Advisory CommitteeCommittee advises and monitors a two-year collaborative study and development plan for a unified Israeli and West Bank olive industry. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">Security situation remains stableParticipants willing to engage | Joint committee established | | Low-program staff | NEF, PCARD, Volcani | <ul style="list-style-type: none"># of events and # of people participating events, trainings, or activities designed to build support for reconciliation.# of Cross-Border Branding, Marketing, and research planning activities | Support a unified Israeli and West Bank olive industry | | Israel and West Bank | Q1-Q2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | Committee established |
| | 1.3b Host quarterly meetings | | | | 10 quarterly meetings hosted | | Medium-program staff and financial staff | NEF, PCARD, Volcani, Peres | | | | | Q3-Q4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Objective 2: Expanded grassroots, cross-border economic cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank.

| Principal Activities | Specific activity | Number of Beneficiaries | Sub-Activities/Description | Assumptions (alternatives if necessary) | Deliverables | Predecessor and links | Level of effort from program & financial staff for activities | Responsibility | Output Indicators | Outcomes | Impact Expected | Location | Timing | 10 | 11 | 12 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | Status of Achievement |
|---|---|---|---|---|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|---|-----------------------|--|--|---|--|--------|----|----|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--|
| Activity 2.1 Develop "Champions" network to scale up community participation in cross-border cooperation in olive sector. | 2.1a Select and train Champions | 6 beneficiaries (3 from the WB and 3 from Israel) | Select participants (Champions) for the training. | | 6 Champions selected & trained | Activity 2.2 and Activity 2.3 | Medium-program staff and financial staff | NEF, PCARD, Peres | • # of people participating in events, trainings, activities designed to build support for reconciliation. | Strengthen community-level leadership for cross-border engagement and reconciliation | Scale up community participation in cross-border cooperation | Israel and West Bank | Q1 | | | | | | | | | | | | | Champions selected; training in next quarter |
| | | | 3-day training in Israel on communications, leadership, conflict management, & technical skills | | | | | | | | | | Q2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Activity 2.2. Conduct single-group and cross-border workshops to engage olive producers in the project | 2.2a Conduct launch workshops for olive producers | | Introduce project and its objectives to interested parties | Security situation remains stable | 5 launch workshops held. | | High-program staff | NEF, PCARD, Champions | • # of people participating in events, trainings, or activities designed to build mass support for peace and reconciliation. | Generate publicity for the project and open new additional channels of communication and access to feedback | Olive producers in the project are engaged | Nablus, Jenin, Ramallah, and Hebron in West Bank | Q2 | | | | | | | | | | | | | Completed |
| | | | Hold four single group launch workshops in each of the 4 new targeted clusters. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2.2b Joint launch workshop | | Hold one central launch workshop for the single-group | | | | | | | | | Ein Herod, Israel | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2.3 Conduct Cross-Border Training for 40 Lead Farmers | 2.3a Participant selection | 40 farmers | Participant selection using methods from OOWB I (including standard grants manual) | | 40 farmers selected | | Medium-program staff and financial staff | NEF, PCARD, Champions | • # of events, trainings, or activities designed to build support for peace or reconciliation on a mass scale. | Improve quality, decrease production costs, and facilitate links to new market opportunities in collaboration with individuals and firms across the border | Network is developed to scale up community participation in cross-border cooperation; Networks among participants strengthened and expanded | Israel and West Bank | Q3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 2.3b Conduct Training of Trainers workshops | 40 farmers | Joint three-day workshop and then four joint follow-up workshops | | 40 farmers trained | | Medium-program staff | NEF, PCARD, Champions | | | | | Q4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

Objective 3: Strengthened cross-border structure of value chains by supporting the creation of networks of service providers and value-added businesses.

| Principal Activities | Specific activity | Number of Beneficiaries | Sub-Activities/Description | Assumptions (alternatives if necessary) | Deliverables | Predecessor and links | Level of effort from program & financial staff for activities | Responsibility | Output Indicators | Outcomes | Impact Expected | Location | Timing | 10 | 11 | 12 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | Status of Achievement |
|---|--|-------------------------|---|---|---------------------------------|-----------------------|---|-------------------|---|--|---|--|---|--------|----|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---------|-----------------------|
| 3.1 Establish 30 Microenterprises). | 3.1a Recruit/select 30 youth | 30 youth | Invite participants to apply for micro-enterprise program; evaluate proposals | | 30 youth selected | Activity 1.3 | Medium-program staff and financial staff | NEF, partners | • # of micro, small and medium enterprises receiving business development services from USG assisted sources. • # of private enterprises, trade/business association, community-based organizations that applied new technologies or management practices. | Microenterprises provide support services to olive farmers | Essential support services are initiated and opportunities for ancillary business development are created | Israel and West Bank | Q2-Q3 | | | | | | | | | | | | Ongoing | |
| | 3.1b Host training workshops | | Joint training workshops, focused on technical aspects, business, conflict management | | 30 youth trained | | Medium-program staff | NEF, PCARD, Peres | | | | | Q4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 3.1c Award start-up fund grants | | Grantees selected based on evaluation of business plans | | Start-up grants awarded | | Medium-program staff and financial staff | NEF | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 3.1d Provide follow-up technical assistance/support | | Hire external coach Technical support to the women. | | Support visits to entrepreneurs | | Medium-program staff and financial staff | NEF, PCARD | | | | | Three times a year for duration of project (starting in Q4) | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3.2 Establish 20 Women-run cooperative microenterprises | 3.2a Cross-border visits for women's association leaders | | Organize 2 Visits for the 20 women | | 6 cross-border field visits | | High-program staff and financial staff | NEF, PCARD, Peres | • # of women participating in events, trainings, or activities designed to build mass support for peace and reconciliation. • % of female participants in programs designed to increase access to productive economic resources. | Facilitate both understanding and collaboration between Israeli and West Bank counterparts, as well as access to new markets | | Israel and West Bank | Q4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 3.2b Recruit women for training | 20 women | Invite applications from women's associations to participate in trainings | | 20 women recruited for training | | High-program staff and financial staff | | | | | | Q3-Q4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| | 3.2c Provide business management training to women | | | Six days of business training | | 20 women trained | | | | | | High-program staff and financial staff | | Israel | | | | | | | | | | | | |

| Principal Activities | Specific activity | Number of Beneficiaries | Sub-Activities/Description | Assumptions (alternatives if necessary) | Deliverables | Predecessor and links | Level of effort from program & financial staff for activities | Responsibility | Output Indicators | Outcomes | Impact Expected | Location | Timing | 10 | 11 | 12 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | |
|---------------------------|--|-------------------------|--|---|---------------------------------|--|---|---|---|----------|----------------------|---------------------------------|--------|----|----|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|-----------|
| Monitoring and Evaluation | Track and document project outputs, indicators, and impact | | Finalize Performance Monitoring Plan | | Performance Monitoring Plan | High-program staff and financial staff | NEF, with PCARD, Peres Center | • Outputs, outcomes, and impact data collected. | • Project model and best practices disseminated | | Israel and West Bank | Duration of project activities. | All | | | | | | | | | | | | | Completed |
| | | | Collect baseline information as defined in the performance monitoring plan | | Baseline information documented | | | | | | | | Q2-Q3 | | | | | | | | | | | | | Ongoing |
| | | | Progress Assessment | | Assessment report | | NEF | | | | | | Q4 | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Environmental Compliance | Ensure project meets all environmental compliance requirements | | Prepare and follow Environmental Mitigation and Monitoring Plan | | EMMP | | NEF | | | | | Duration of project activities. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

APPENDIX 2: TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR OOWB II JOINT MARKET ASSESSMENT



Near East Foundation
230 Euclid Avenue
Syracuse, NY 13210
Tel: 315.428-8670

TERMS OF REFERENCE

Consultancy Contract for OOWB II Joint Market Assessment

Date Prepared: December 15, 2014

| Part I – Contract Data | |
|--------------------------------|---|
| Project Title: | Olive Oil Without Borders II: Expanding Cross-border Collaboration in the Olive Sector |
| Period of Performance: | 20 days of effort (specifics will be decided in negotiations with team and the consultant) |
| Location of Assignment: | Israel and the West Bank |
| Primary NEF Contact: | Salah Abu Eisheh, Project Director/Country Director and Regional Program Coordinator for the Middle East and Caucasus |

Part II - Introduction and Objectives

Building on the success and momentum of the USAID-funded Olive Oil without Borders (OOWB) project, Olive Oil Without Borders II: Expanding Cross-border Collaboration in the Olive Sector aims to strengthen linkages between Israeli and West Bank olive industry leaders and to expand to new communities and regions. The project works with 1,500 olive farmers in 58 communities in the West Bank and Israel to (1) build working relationships between business, policy, and academic leaders through cross-border workshops and joint initiatives; (2) expand economic cooperation to farmers, mill owners, and distributors in 34 current villages and in 24 new villages; and (3) develop 50 ancillary businesses, including cross-border collaboration between women's fair-trade associations.

Objective 1: Promote cross-border cooperation and leadership development through joint marketing and applied research.

Objective 2: Expand grassroots, cross-border economic cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank.

Objective 3: Strengthen value chains structurally by supporting the creation of networks of service providers and value-added businesses.

The *OOWB II Joint Market Assessment* will be undertaken in coordination with the Israeli Olive Oil Council (IOOC) and Palestinian Olive Oil Council (POOC). The assessment will evaluate the nature of olive oil products in both the West Bank and Israel, costs in terms of production, market

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dynamics, and competitive advantages. Potential markets will be assessed and identified. The assessment will also look at ways to protect and preserve the olive oil being produced locally.

The assessment will likewise consider marketing approaches (niches) that both sides should follow as well as steps to build the brand that could be taken which have the greatest chance of success in growing the project participants' businesses. The Joint Market Assessment will design networks to share market information and facilitate cross-border marketing taking the form of, for example, joint participation in international trade shows.

Through work with the IOOC and POOC, the consultant is expected to hold meetings with stakeholders such as the Bank of Palestine, Islamic Bank, Arab Islamic Bank, SEC, POOC, IOOC, Peres Center for Peace, Palestinian Center for Agricultural Research and Development (PCARD), PARCC, UNRWA, Chamber of Commerce, USAID, UNDP, Volcani Institute, MoA, bottling companies in addition to direct interaction with olive oil producers in the growth markets.

Part III - Roles and Responsibilities

The consultant is expected to spend 10 days working on the assessment in the field with members of the POOC and IOOC, as well as 10 days of desk research and report writing.

The consultant will be expected to:

- (1) Conduct a joint market assessment that considers:
 - a. The nature of products on each side and their cost of production
 - b. How to protect and preserve olive oil produced locally
 - c. The local supply and demand of olive oil on both sides.
 - d. The competitive advantage each side has and the joint competitive advantage both sides potentially have combined
 - e. Potential markets
 - f. Marketing approaches (niches) both sides should follow
 - g. Building the brand
- (2) Design networks to share market information, and
- (3) Facilitate cross-border marketing (e.g., joint participation in international trade shows).

(4) Provide information, recommendations, and advisement on trade shows, including direction and guidance regarding their application processes.

At the end of the consultancy, the consultant should provide a detailed assessment of marketing approaches or niches in the West Bank and Israel. The report should include:

1. A detailed value chain flowchart for each one of the identified segment/niches (from the supplier/raw material to the market outreach local, regional or international). Included in this should be analysis of the impact of movement restrictions on the operations and marketing of the olive oil industry in the West Bank and Israel.
2. Four detailed case studies from both sides focusing on marketing, export, and filling and packaging.
3. A matrix of the potential cooperation between different actors from the private/public and civil society sectors.

Part IV - Milestones and Deliverables



The consultant is expected to provide the following deliverables:

- Questionnaire used for the individual meetings with stakeholders and summary of work with IOOC and POOC.
- Initial contacts established with the various stakeholders in the process.
- Presentation of initial findings in a live presentation to IOOC, POOC, and project partners using PowerPoint.
- A final report at the end of the study addressing its central aim and objectives including the detailed value chain flowchart and the matrix of actors and potential partners.

| Activities | Number of days | Date |
|---|----------------|------|
| Desk Research | 4 | TBD |
| Field research in coordination with IOOC and POOC | 10 | " |
| Assessment Draft completed | 4 | " |
| Assessment Report finalized based on comments | 2 | " |
| Total | 20 | |

Part V - Technical Direction, Management and Communication

The consultant(s) will report to Salah Abu Eishah (sabuaishah@neareast.org), Country Director and Regional Program Coordinator for the Middle East and Caucasus.

Part VI - Requirements

The Joint Market Assessment will be carried out by an international olive oil market expert, working along with members of the IOOC and POOC. The consultant should have a strong understanding of the olive oil industry and entrepreneurial ecosystems in both the West Bank and Israel. The expert should be able to support the IOOC and POOC in discerning and understanding opportunities joint collaboration, as well as for youth and women entrepreneurs working in this field. The consultant's skill set should include the following:

- Knowledge and experience with market assessments, olive production, and the Israeli/Palestinian context.
- Demonstrated experience leading interviews, focus groups and conducting similar research.
- Prior experience producing professional reports.
- Professional capacity in English required; knowledge of Arabic and/or Hebrew is beneficial.

APPENDIX 3: OOWB PRESS

“Israeli and Palestinian Farmers Unite Over Olive Oil: Can an Agricultural Project Really Overcome Years of Bitter Tribalism,” (Assaf Dudai), *Good Magazine*:
<http://magazine.good.is/features/olive-oil-without-borders-israel-palestine>

Israeli and Palestinian Farmers Unite Over Olive Oil

Can an Agricultural Project Really Overcome Years of Bitter Tribalism? *by Assaf Dudai*

February 15, 2015

“There is no real border between Israel and Palestine,” says Muhammad Hamudi, an olive farmer and olive oil producer from Asira al-Shamaliya, near Nablus in the West Bank. He has been working with the ongoing USAID-funded project Olive Oil Without Borders (OOWB) since its inception in 2011. Hamudi is in his mid-50s, with smiling eyes and palms so big an olive looks miniscule in them. “Today the border is here, tomorrow it will be there. The olive oil market has no borders as well. The bridge to the global market is the same bridge for everyone.”

OOWB is a collaborative economic initiative among 34 olive oil farming communities in Israel and the West Bank. It is spearheaded by the Near East Foundation (NEF), a 100-year old nongovernmental organization working on economic development among poverty-stricken communities throughout Africa and the Mideast. The initiative is funded by USAID, which provides financial and operative assistance to foreign nations and regions in need. The program has been successful enough that USAID has just granted OOWB its second \$1.2 million round of funding, expected to serve some 2,000 Palestinians and Israelis working in the olive oil business over the course of three years.

Hamudi is one of the project’s success stories, points out Salah Abu-Eisheh, NEF country director for the Palestinian Authority. “During the three-year run he has tripled his production, improved significantly the quality and purity of his olive oil, and increased his income.” Hamudi smiles when he hears Abu-Eisheh say this. “NEF helped me achieve a sustained level of productivity,” Hamudi says. “No more bad years and good years; now I am in control of the yield.”

This success is due in large part to direct grants farmers like Hamudi received for purchasing modern equipment, renovating facilities (such as mills), and planting new varieties of olive trees. The rest of the USAID funding goes to conducting seminars and hands-on workshops led by industry consultants, from agriculture and olive oil production to business management and marketing.

Yet Palestinian farmers are only half of the OOWB equation: Israeli farmers and producers provide the necessary cross-border collaboration for this innovative and seemingly conflict-free program.

When I ask Hamudi about his experience collaborating with his Israeli-Jewish counterparts, his answer is pragmatic. “I see it as an exchange. We have things to teach, and they have things to teach. They use modern techniques, we have experience and knowledge. The benefits are for both sides. We have no other choice.”

But for a region mired in political conflict, collaborating is a choice—and quite an unusual one. Ayala Noy, a 40 year-old farmer and producer from Moshav Zippori, a farm community 20 minutes north of Nazareth on the Israeli side, approaches the project from a different perspective: “It was a very important and empowering experience. Sitting down with a Palestinian farmer who tells me, with tears in his eyes, that his orchard was burned to the ground the previous night by Israeli settlers was very emotional for me. ‘How do you sleep at night?’ he asked me. I told him not very well. That was the biggest challenge for me—being a representative of Israel, dealing with the hard feelings they have toward us.”

Though one of OOWB’s stated goals is to “leverage economic cooperation to promote peace and reconciliation,” according to NEF President Charlie Benjamin, the organization approaches its work from “a completely depoliticized perspective.” The focus is on “building economic relationships. We don’t touch the broader issues.” At the same time, Benjamin does acknowledge the growing trust, communication, and interaction outside the program.

Noy agrees that the project has strengthened more than economic ties. “We brought Palestinians to our house, we showed them our mill, and we try to keep in touch by phone,” she says. “I think it gave them a chance to see ‘other’ Israelis. Many of them told me that was their first time to meet an Israeli who is not a soldier, or a settler.”

Similar sentiment is echoed from the other side of the fence. Sumaya Sawalmeh, a 40-year-old farmer from the same village as Hamudi, says, “It was important for me to take part in the project. I came into Israel [and] for the first time in my life...left with positive feelings.”

Adel Yaseen, an elderly farmer with a thundering voice from the nearby village of Jnaid, agrees. “I made friends from Israel. The project helped us to build relationships and brought us closer.”

Olives, and in particular olive oil, have always been among the most vital sectors of the local economy in the Middle East. Similar to grape vineyards in Napa, or rice fields in Asia, the West Bank is covered with olive orchards. The same is true for the Galilee region of Israel. In these regions olives are more than a means of livelihood; they are a way of living. Entire families and villages live off the yearly cycle of the olive trees. In Palestine, 100,000 families participate in the industry, which accounts for more than 10 percent of the state’s GDP.

As the olive oil industry is so vital to the region, NEF decided to engage with the sector and initiate this historic collaboration with Israel after recognizing a production surplus on the Palestinian side and a production deficit on the Israeli side. Meaning, the Palestinians had been producing more olive oil than they could sell, while the Israeli market suffered from a shortage of local oil. The solution seemed at once simple, yet, given the politics of the region, immensely complex.

The first major roadblock was the trade ban between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, which has been in place since 2003, the middle of the second intifada. As negotiations between the respective governments took place, NEF communicated with both parties and attempted to illuminate the ban’s economic effects. In the beginning of 2013, the ban was finally lifted, allowing OOWB to rise to its full potential.

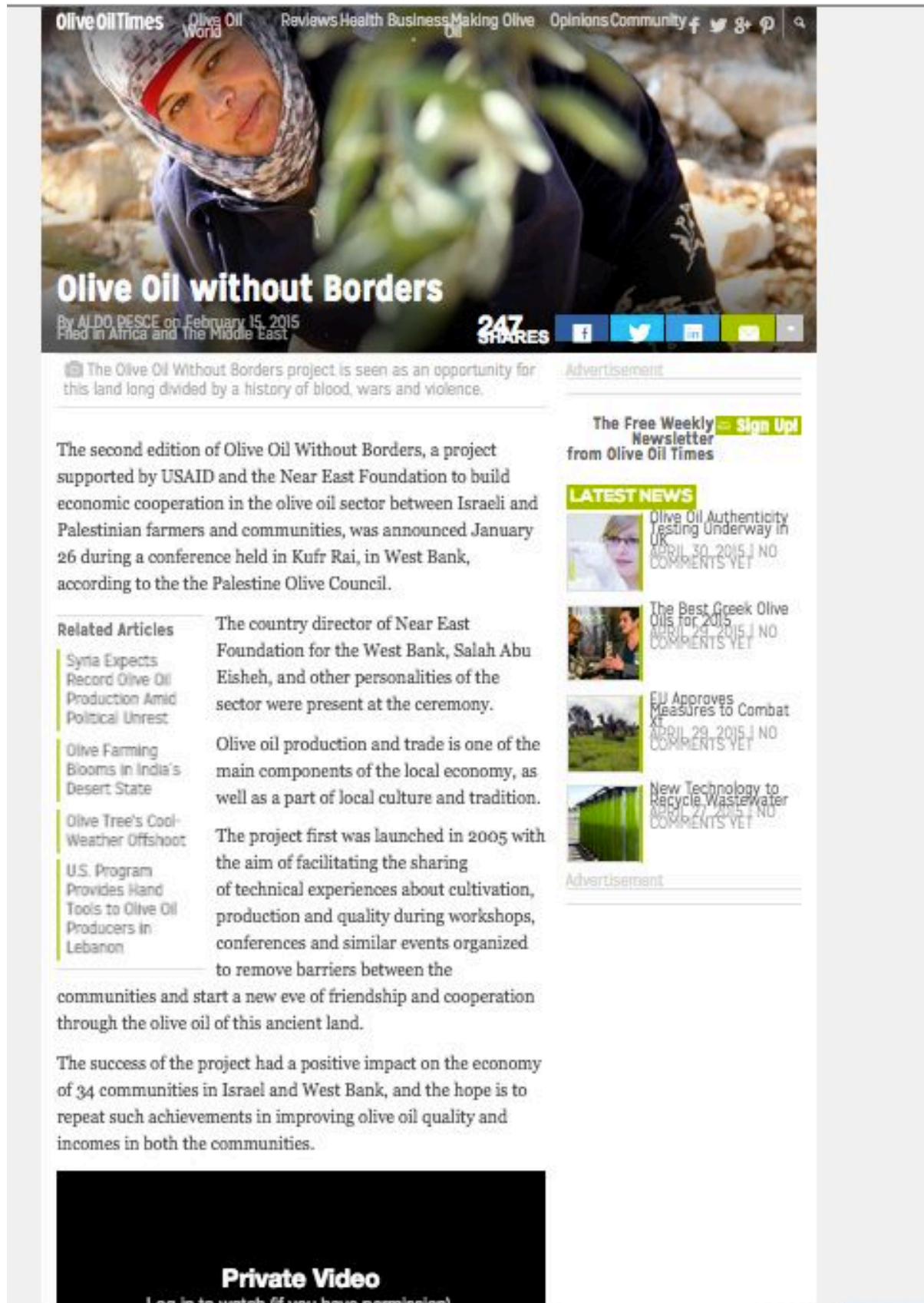
“This is exactly what should be going on in the region right now—everyone coming together,” Dave Harden, USAID mission director in the Palestinian Authority, tells me at an OOWB gathering of Israeli and Palestinian olive farmers at an orchard outside Nazareth. “They are building stuff together, they’re producing higher quality products, and they’re selling them. What more can you ask for?”

Just before leaving the orchard for the mill, Abu Naim, the host farmer, leads me by hand to one of the largest trees in the orchard. “You see this tree, it is about 3,000 years old. It still gives fruits every year.” I look at the tree, its massively wide trunk, its sprawling top. It looks healthy and full of life.

Those behind OOWB claim to be more focused on the practical realities of olive oil production than the draw of ancient agricultural tradition or the thorny task of Middle East fence mending. Yet their work is inexorably tied to and ultimately results in the project’s loftier outcomes. “We focus on building the system, this economic machine, but those dynamics have a broader impact,” NEF President Benjamin tells me. On top of the 3,600 metric tons of olive oil Palestinian farmers have exported into Israel since 2013, representing \$20 million in new income, Benjamin says “70 percent of OOWB participants say they believe economic cooperation helps build additional efforts at reconciliation between the two sides.”

It’s hard not to be struck by the metaphor of the olive branch—a cliché perhaps but literally apt here.

“Olive Oil Without Borders” (Aldo Pesce), February 15, 2015 in *Olive Oil Times*,
<http://www.oliveoiltimes.com/olive-oil-basics/olive-oil-without-borders/46573>



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Olive Oil without Borders

By ALDO PESCE on February 15, 2015
Filed in Africa and The Middle East

247 SHARES

The Olive Oil Without Borders project is seen as an opportunity for this land long divided by a history of blood, wars and violence.

The second edition of Olive Oil Without Borders, a project supported by USAID and the Near East Foundation to build economic cooperation in the olive oil sector between Israeli and Palestinian farmers and communities, was announced January 26 during a conference held in Kufr Rai, in West Bank, according to the the Palestine Olive Council.

Related Articles

- Syria Expects Record Olive Oil Production Amid Political Unrest
- Olive Farming Blooms in India's Desert State
- Olive Tree's Cool-Weather Offshoot
- U.S. Program Provides Hand Tools to Olive Oil Producers in Lebanon

The country director of Near East Foundation for the West Bank, Salah Abu Eishah, and other personalities of the sector were present at the ceremony.

Olive oil production and trade is one of the main components of the local economy, as well as a part of local culture and tradition.

The project first was launched in 2005 with the aim of facilitating the sharing of technical experiences about cultivation, production and quality during workshops, conferences and similar events organized to remove barriers between the communities and start a new eve of friendship and cooperation through the olive oil of this ancient land.

The success of the project had a positive impact on the economy of 34 communities in Israel and West Bank, and the hope is to repeat such achievements in improving olive oil quality and incomes in both the communities.

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So far the Near East Foundation has involved more than 3,000 Palestinian farmers in the project and improved their know-how in olive oil production, harvesting and post-harvesting operations. NEF also cares about the commercial issues and helps these small producers in presenting their products to the market to gain a fair price.

During the conference these aspects and other goals were mentioned. The [Olive Oil Without Borders](#) project is seen as an opportunity for this land long divided by a history of blood, wars and violence.

Sources:

Palestine Olive Council

Near East Foundation

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Wikipedia
March 6, 2015

Olive Oil Without Borders: Promoting Peace in the Middle East

by [Alison Costa](#)

Growing up in an Italian household, one of the most important staples that was never lacking was the widely popular “liquid gold” - or more commonly, olive oil. Drizzled on that delicious caprese salad, as a principal ingredient in any pasta sauce or just used in the oil and balsamic dip for our fresh bread, I cannot imagine my life without it. Maybe that’s a little bit dramatic, but the availability of olive oil in my household is not exaggerated.



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The importance of olive oil does not stop at my household, or even within the Italian community. This substance called “liquid gold” actually has peace-building capabilities - specifically in the Israel-Palestine context.

The history of the Israel-Palestine conflict goes back a long way (an understatement, I know). Despite recent attempts from various governments to leverage peace talks, the conflict is far from over. At the moment, there are still regular bombings, people being shot, and civilians feeling unsafe walking down the street. There are, however, small initiatives that are using unique ways to work towards mending the conflict and strengthening Israel-Palestine relations. One such project is called [Olive Oil Without Borders](#) which is run by the [Near East Foundation \(NEF\)](#) - an NGO working on economic development in Africa and the Middle East. Here are three reasons why OOWB is working so well and why it should be a model for other peace-building initiatives:

1) A Great Project with Everyone Working Together



www.wikipedia.org

Olive trees have been the foundation of rural economies in Palestine and Israel for generations. While they hold much value to the people of these areas, they have also been known to trigger conflict. This program is trying to use it for peace.

Olive Oil Without Borders is a collaborative economic initiative among 34 olive oil farming communities in Israel and the West Bank that incorporates over 2000 participants (farmers, oil mill operators, intermediaries and distributors). Objectives of the project include: delivering real economic results to project participants by improving olive production, olive oil quality, and sector competitiveness; strengthening grassroots and cross border economic cooperation; and leveraging economic cooperation to promote peace and reconciliation. Project participants are improving their income from olive oil production and community leaders are participating in cross-border training programs and collaborative activities organized jointly by Palestinian and Israeli organizations. This type of activity is very rare in the region.

The primary donors of this project are USAID, Human Concern International, United Nations Development Programme and the World Food Program. In addition to these donor organizations, there are also implementation partners working with the Near East Foundation. OOWB has been so successful that USAID has just granted it's second round of \$1.2 million USD of funding over the next three years. They do say that the way to a person's heart is through their stomach. Perhaps this tasty olive oil means a solution to the decades long conflict between these two regions is not so far away after all.

2) A Sense of Ownership from Project Participants



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Since the olive oil industry is so vital to this region, NEF decided to engage with the sector and initiate this historic collaboration with Israel after recognizing a production surplus on the Palestinian side and a production deficit on the Israeli side. This means the Palestinians had been producing more olive oil than they could sell, while the Israeli market suffered from a shortage of local oil. The solution seemed simple, yet, given the politics of the region, it was immensely complex.

Assaf Dudai, a reporter with the [Daily Good](http://www.dailygood.org) interviewed a couple of participants taking part in the OOWB project. Salah Abu-Eisheh, NEF country director for the Palestinian Authority spoke about one of the project's success stories, a man named Hamudi. "During the three-year run he has tripled his production, improved significantly the quality and purity of his olive oil, and increased his income." Hamudi added, "NEF helped me achieve a sustained level of productivity. No more bad years and good years; now I am in control of the yield."

This success is due in large part to direct grants farmers like Hamudi receive to purchase modern equipment, renovate facilities (such as mills), and plant new varieties of olive trees.

3) Cross-Border Collaboration



Foodista on www.flickr.com

The aspect of this project that I find the most inspiring and motivating is the collaboration between two groups of people that historically do not like each other.

In his interview with Assaf Dudai, Hamudi commented on collaborating with his Israeli counterparts. He stated: "I see it as an exchange. We have things to teach, and they have things to teach. They use modern techniques, we have experience and knowledge. The benefits are for both sides. We have no other choice."

Though one of OOWB's stated goals is to "leverage economic cooperation to promote peace and reconciliation," according to NEF President Charlie Benjamin, the organization approaches its work from "a completely depoliticized perspective." The focus is on "building economic relationships. We don't touch the broader issues." At the same time, Benjamin does acknowledge the growing trust, communication, and interaction even outside of the program.

Throughout the project, Israeli experts and Palestinian producers have come together across the border, to taste and judge samples of olive oil from other countries. They weigh the pros and cons of their competition and discuss ways to make their joint venture better. They also tour Israeli and Palestinian olive groves, share a meal, some coffee and discuss their separate systems. This almost seems unbelievable knowing the history between these two groups.

The objective behind Olive Oil Without Borders might be economic, but the positive interactions and relationship building is really what is at the root of it and we as global citizens need to learn from that.

"This is exactly what should be going on in the region right now—everyone coming together," Dave Harden, USAID mission director in the Palestinian Authority, told Dudai at an OOWB gathering of Israeli and Palestinian olive farmers. "They are building stuff together, they're producing higher quality products, and they're selling them. What more can you ask for?"

The fact that a group of Israelis and Palestinians have figured out how to "extend an olive branch" to each other, makes me believe that peace in the Middle East, may actually be possible.

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About the Author



[Alison Costa](#)

Alison Costa is one of the Canada Live Below the Line Officers. She comes from an International Development background and most recently spent a year working with a small organization in Nicaragua before joining the GPP team in January 2015. She currently lives in downtown Toronto with two cats and two dogs.

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Olive Oil of Hope

POSTED BY PAIGE ALEXANDER

MARCH 13, 2015



Farmer Collects Olives During Harvest in a Village on the Outskirts of Ramallah

Olive oil connoisseurs, take note. I recently tasted organic olive oil that would satisfy the most discerning palates, and it has the added element of peace-building, too.

While traveling in the West Bank for the first time as USAID's Assistant Administrator of the Bureau for the Middle East last month, I noticed the landscape was dotted with olive trees. To Palestinian farmers, olive trees represent economic opportunities and hold cultural significance. A hundred thousand Palestinian families in the West Bank depend on the olive oil industry, an important part of the Palestinian economy.

Olive oil also represents an important opportunity for peace-building in a region marked with strife.

Implemented by the U.S.-based Near East Foundation, USAID's Olive Oil Without Borders project builds trust, mutual understanding and collaboration through economic cooperation in olive oil. It has allowed 1,500 Palestinian and Israeli olive farmers, mill operators and olive oil distributors to meet, share farming methods in workshops, improve their skills and increase olive oil production and profit through global exports.

All of this is consistent with USAID's mission to promote resilient, democratic societies.

In the past, olive oil prices in the West Bank fell because the market was limited and exports were minimal. One of the most striking achievements of Olive Oil Without Borders was an agreement reached in February 2013 by Palestinian and Israeli officials that allowed Israeli citizens to purchase Palestinian olive oil for the first time in 10 years. As a result, in less than two years, 3,600 metric tons of Palestinian olive oil were sold to Israeli companies. Palestinian farmers increased revenues by \$20 million.

During my visit, I met Muhammed Shouly at his organic olive farm in Asira Shamaliya, in the northern West Bank. Shouly has been actively involved in Olive Oil Without Borders since its launch in 2011.

For centuries, Palestinian farmers relied solely on rainwater for their olive trees. During cross-border meetings that brought Shouly and other Palestinian farmers together with their Israeli counterparts, he learned about supplementary irrigation, a technique to provide olive trees with additional water. Shouly applied this method on his olive orchard during the summer months and it tripled his harvest.

I also talked to Miyassar Yassin, another farmer from Asira Shamaliya participating in Olive Oil Without Borders. She took part in an olive oil quality tasting seminar with Palestinian and Israeli farmers, learning to quickly identify virgin and extra virgin olive oil

The project has upgraded 18 olive mills in the West Bank and Israel, representing one-fifth of the olive mills in the area. The renovation of Qussay Hamadneh’s mill—which included the replacement of steel tanks for storing olive oil—vastly improved sanitary conditions and boosted the quality of the olive oil produced.

Olive Oil Without Borders is just one of dozens of programs that we support throughout the West Bank and Israel. Its success lies in bringing together individuals from different backgrounds to work on issues of common concern. The visit gave me great hope because participants are not only learning how to increase production, they are also learning about each other

Before leaving, I planted an olive tree. I know the farmers I met will nurture it, and I look forward to coming back to see how it has grown and pick its olives.

About the author: Paige Alexander serves as USAID Assistant Administrator of the Bureau for the Middle East.

Editor's note: This blog entry originally appeared on the [USAID Impact Blog](#).

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Olive Oil of Hope

Posted by [Paige Alexander](#) on Wednesday, March 11th 2015

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Olive oil connoisseurs, take note. I recently tasted organic olive oil that would satisfy the most discerning palates, and it has the added element of peace-building, too.



Near East Foundation staff present USAID Assistant Administrator Paige Alexander with the final product: organic olive oil produced with support from the Olive Oil Without Borders project. / Lubna Rifi, USAID

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USAID Assistant Administrator of the Bureau for the Middle East plants an olive tree with olive farmers participating in the Olive Oil Without Borders project. / Lubna Rifi, USAID



Muhammad Shouly is an olive farmer who tripled his harvest after learning about supplementary irrigation techniques through the Olive Oil Without Borders project. / Lubna Rifi, USAID

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Miyassar Yassin just concluded an olive oil quality tasting seminar through the Olive Oil Without Borders project. Here she is with her two daughters. / Lubna Rifi, USAID

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Qussay Hamadneh improved the quality of the olive oil he produces with support from the Olive Oil Without Borders project. / Lubna Rifi, USAID

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The USAID-supported Olive Oil Without Borders project brings together Palestinian and Israeli farmers to increase the quality and quantity of olive oil. / Lubna Rifi, USAID

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Paige Alexander is USAID Assistant Administrator of the Bureau for the Middle East

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